

REMARKS

Claims 1-23, 25, and 38-54 were pending after entry of Applicants' March 15, 2006 Amendment. By the present Amendment, the subject matter of dependent claims 50, 52, and 54 is incorporated into their respective independent claims 1, 5, and 14. To effect these amendments, claims 50, 52 and 54 are canceled, and claims 1, 5, 14, 51, 53, and 55 are amended. Additionally, claims 23, 25, 38, and 39 are canceled. Upon entry of this Amendment, claims 1-22, 40-49, 51, 53, and 55 will be pending.

Applicant gratefully acknowledges the allowance of claims 42-49.

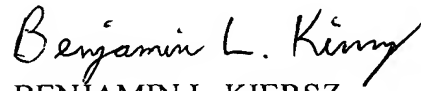
Claims 23, 25, 38, and 39 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by *Sederberg et al.* (U.S. Pat. No. 5,992,023). To expedite prosecution of the present application, Applicants have canceled claims 23, 25, 38, and 39 without prejudice or disclaimer, and therefore submit that this rejection is now moot.

Independent claims 1-11, 14-20, and 50-55 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over *Morikawa* (U.S. Pat. No. 5,339,525) in view of *Sederberg*. Applicants traverse this rejection as applied to amended claims 1, 5, and 14, which are amended to incorporate the subject matter of dependent claims 50, 52, and 54, respectively. During Applicants' March 1, 2006 interview with the Examiner, the Examiner agreed that the following recitation overcomes the combination of *Sederberg* and *Morikawa*: "each said tip portion protruding laterally with respect to a surface of said central region." Accordingly, Applicants' March 15, 2006 Amendment added this recitation to dependent claims 50, 52, and 54, which depend from independent claims 1, 5, and 14, respectively. Despite agreeing that this recitation overcomes the combination of *Sederberg* and *Morikawa*, the Examiner rejected dependent claims 51, 53, and 55 in the June 1, 2006 Office Action. Applicants brought this inconsistency to the Examiner's attention in a telephonic interview on June 7, 2006. The Examiner suggested that Applicants submit an After-Final Amendment incorporating this recitation into the independent claims. Applicants have done so via the present Amendment, and therefore submit that *Morikawa* and *Sederberg* do not disclose or suggest a combination of recitations including, among others, "each said tip portion protruding laterally with respect to a surface of said central region," as recited in amended independent claims 1, 5, or 14. Dependent claims 2-4, 6-13, 15-22, 40-41, 51, 53, and 55 are allowable at least because they depend from allowable independent claims 1, 5, or 14. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request allowance of pending claims 1-22, 40-41, 51, 53, and 55.

Entry of the this amendment is appropriate under 37 CFR 1.116 because (a) it places the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed above; (b) it does not raise any new issues that would require further consideration and/or search; (c) it does not add any claims without canceling a corresponding number of claims; and (d) it places the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. Entry of this amendment is thus respectfully requested.

Please charge any fees associated with the submission of this paper to Deposit Account Number 033975. The Commissioner for Patents is also authorized to credit any over payments to the above-referenced Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,
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